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SUBJECT: SICILIAN GOVERNOR RESIGNS

REF: NAPLES 7

CLASSIFIED BY: J. PATRICK TRUHN, CONSUL GENERAL, AMCONGEN  
NAPLES, STATE.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[¶1.](#) (U) Following his January 18 conviction for assisting mafia figures (reftel), Sicilian Regional President Salvatore Cuffaro finally resigned from office January 26 in the wake of protests.

After the conviction, Cuffaro had originally said he would not resign, and would appeal the verdict and five-year jail sentence. However, media photos of him celebrating afterwards with a huge platter cannoli (a Sicilian pastry) led vocal street demonstrators (some of whom wore cannoli costumes) to call for his head.

[¶2.](#) (U) In announcing his resignation, Cuffaro said he sensed "a growing hostility" toward him from Sicilian Regional Assembly members, and claimed, "I prefer to follow the path of humility."

Cuffaro's adversaries welcomed his decision to step down, and even his supporters called it "honorable." The Regional Vice President, Lino Leanza, will take over the governorship until the next elections.

[¶3.](#) (U) Press reports indicate that the leader of Cuffaro's party (Cuffaro is the Deputy Secretary of the Union of Christian Democrats of the Center - UDC), Pier Fernando Casini, has told Cuffaro that he will head the party list for Sicily if and when national Senate elections are called.

[¶4.](#) (C) Comment: That Casini is willing to give Cuffaro a vote of confidence is in large measure an indication of Cuffaro's continuing influence as a power broker in Sicily, where the UDC has a strong base. Cuffaro was elected to the Senate as the head of the UDC's party list for Sicily in 2006, but he resigned when he was reelected governor. Many analysts believe that Cuffaro, through church, political, and perhaps organized crime connections, can still deliver the vote in Sicily.

TRUHN